

ICCAT ANNUAL MEETING 2016

OPENING STATEMENT EUROPEAN UNION

The European Union is honoured to host the 20th Special meeting of ICCAT in this enchanting corner of Portugal. We would like to express our deep appreciation to the Portuguese authorities for their hospitality and acknowledge the relentless work of the Secretariat for the excellent organisation of this meeting in Vilamoura.

There is certainly no more appropriate place to celebrate the 50th anniversary of ICCAT than here, in a country with such a strong maritime and fisheries tradition, which gave birth to sea explorers that changed our history, like Ferdinand Magellan.

As in previous years, ICCAT and its CPCs have delivered efficiently on an increasing range of issues and have therefore contributed in raising high expectations from the civil society and the fishing industry on its capacity to manage fish stocks under its purview. There is no doubt that ICCAT has become today a model of best practice in the tuna-RFMO world. This is also reflected in the outcomes of the second performance review, which acknowledged the considerable progress made since the 2008 performance review. There are however a number of areas where further improvement is sought and the European Union stands ready to work with all CPCs to follow up on the performance review recommendation and to further strengthen ICCAT's governance through better science-based decisions, stronger control and enforcement measures and higher compliance by its members. In this vein, the EU hopes very much that consensus on the Convention Amendment can be reached after many years of discussion to turn ICCAT into an even more modern organisation.

The European Union firmly believes that ICCAT should also continue promoting ambitious measures for the sustainable management of resources under its purview, notably for those with new stock assessments. This year it will be particularly important to address the worrying situation of Mediterranean Swordfish, without forgetting the need to ensure sustainable exploitation of tropical tuna. The continuation of the Working Group on FADs will be essential in this respect, including the exchange of good practices in the framework of a joint tuna-RFMOs FAD Working Group to take place in 2017 under the auspices of ICCAT. As in previous years, the European Union will continue to promote the responsible and precautionary management of shark stocks that are caught in association with ICCAT fisheries. In view of the sharp increases of catches of blue sharks, we should not further postpone decisive action. The European Union will also continue promoting the introduction of a fins naturally-attached policy, for which we welcome the increasing support by many Contracting Parties. The adoption

of these proposals would further contribute in positioning ICCAT as the lead RFMO in the management of sharks.

The European Union is pleased with the developments towards better science, including the dialogue between scientists and fisheries managers, which this year took place in Panel 2. Better science comes however at a cost. The European Union has recognised this by providing a substantial contribution to the GBYP research programme (8 million € over the last 6 years) and we expect to see the results of this large project to be used in the new BFT stock assessment that will take place in 2017. In addition, more recently, the important programme for the tagging of Atlantic Tropical Tunas (13.7 million € over five years) started to yield promising results. The European Union calls on all CPCs active in ICCAT tropical tuna fisheries, as well as stakeholders, to actively contribute to this project and to provide the necessary co-financing of 10% over the period covered by the programme.

As in the past, the European Union continues to attach the utmost importance to the compliance process.. Only full compliance by everybody guarantees a level playing field across the entire Convention Area and among all ICCAT CPCs and ensures the desired effect of conservation measures. We are committed to ensure that ICCAT maintains a high level of commitment for the compliance review and assessment and we are confident that this process will continue to be guided by a solution-oriented and pragmatic approach in order to further enable ICCAT to stand by its global mission.

The European Union delegation would like to express its wholehearted wish for full recovery to the ICCAT Chairman Martin Tsamenyi, who will be certainly missed by all of us during the forthcoming days.

The European Union is looking forward to working constructively with all CPCs in order to achieve these ambitious goals at the 20th Special Meeting of ICCAT.